Integrity Research & Consulting

South Carolina
Virtual School Program Report
May 2008 – May 2009

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A REPORT ON THE SOUTH CAROLINA VIRTUAL SCHOOL PROGRAM

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Executive Summary

The South Carolina Virtual School Program (SCVSP) was officially established in May 2007 by the South Carolina Legislature in an effort to meet the educational needs of both students in the K-12 program and adults who wanted to obtain their high school diploma.   As a part of the bill establishing the SCVSP, the SC Legislature stipulated that the South Carolina Department of Education provide the General Assembly an annual report. The bill mandated that the report should include (but was not limited to) the following information:

1. List of courses offered through the virtual school;
2. Number of local school districts and number of the district students participating in the virtual school;
3. Private schools and number of the private school students participating in the virtual school;
4. Number of home-school students participating in the virtual school;
5. Success rates for students by courses enrolled in the virtual school;
6. Number of students who dropped a course and reasons for dropping;
7. Expenditures made for the virtual school; and
8. Number of students unable to enroll because of space limitation. (South Carolina General Assembly, 2007-2008, Virtual School Program, Section 59-16-60)

The SCVSP contracted with Integrity Research & Consulting to produce The South Carolina Virtual School Report, May 2008-May 2009. This report is the second in a series.   The data for this report were collected over three instructional "sessions" (i.e. Summer 2008, Fall 2008, Spring 2009). The research team downloaded the primary data set for analysis on May 22, 2009, after the Spring 2009 semester came to a close. The data were then subjected to a series of statistical analyses to meet the requirements of the General Assembly and to address additional issues that arose during the analytical process. The data revealed continued growth and challenges for the SCVSP.
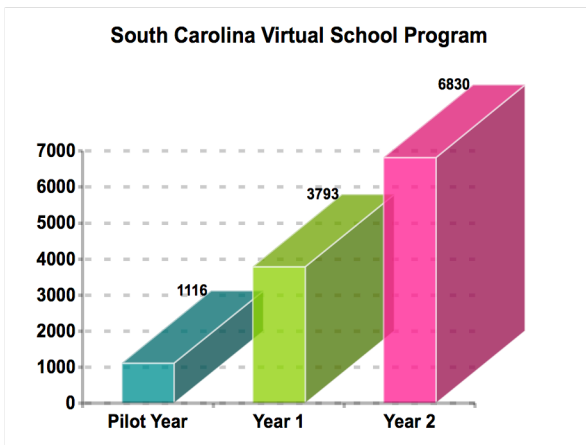
During the 2008-2009 school year, *6,830* individual students registered for one or more of the courses offered by the SCVSP during the 2008-2009 school year. This resulted in an unprecedented ***80% growth*** in individual student enrollments when compared to the 2007-2008 school year. This rate of growth was significantly higher than that of similar programs across the nation. Keeping Pace (2008) reported that approximately one third of the nations programs were growing at a rate greater

than 50% annually; 15% were growing 25-50% annually; and another 15% were growing 10-25% annually.

While the unprecedented growth stands out as one of the primary findings for the 2008-2009 school year, the statistical analyses yielded other important findings. Highlights include:

- 43% of the student population was male while 57% was female;
- 37% of the student population was African American, 54% were Caucasian, with Asians, Hispanics, and Native American's making up another 8%, and approximately1% chose not to report their race or ethnic background;
- 67 courses were offered to support educational needs of grades 7-12 and adults;
- 26% of the 6,830 students chose to register for more than one SCVSP course bringing the total number of course registrations to 9,051;
- 64% of the students enrolled in the SCVSP passed the course in which they were enrolled; and
- 3863 students dropped out of their course (this number combines those that dropped during the grace period with those withdrawing with a failing grade).

The data confirms virtual learning is gaining momentum in South Carolina and one of the biggest challenges the SCVSP faces today is scalability. As demand on the SCVSP continues to increase, additional physical and human resources will be required to ensure quality of instruction and operations.

It is recommended that the SCVSP focus on: (1) increasing student success for all students regardless of course type (i.e. AP, Honors, College Preparatory, and Content Recovery courses); (2) decreasing the number of students who drop courses; and (3) creating long term-scalable solutions to address the problems associated with extraordinary program growth that place a drain on the SCDE's limited resources.

A REPORT ON THE SOUTH CAROLINA
VIRTUAL SCHOOL PROGRAM

In May 2007, the South Carolina Legislature officially established the South Carolina Virtual School Program (SCVSP) in an effort to meet the educational needs of both students in the K-12 program and adults who wanted to return to the educational arena in order to obtain their high school diploma. In doing so, the SC Legislature provided learners of all ages with viable options for academic success in non-traditional, flexible learning environments.

In conjunction with the creation of the SCVSP, the general assembly set forth a requirement that an outside agency would be responsible for providing a yearly report on the success of the newly formed organization. Accordingly, the purpose of this report is to provide the South Carolina General Assembly, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), and other interested parties with information regarding the SCVSP's progress during its second year of operation (May 2008-May 2009). Given that this is the second in a series of reports, the background information on the formation of the SCVSP (which was included in the first report) is included in the appendices (see Appendix A).

Measuring Success

As stated earlier, the SC Legislature stipulated that the South Carolina Department of Education would provide the General Assembly with an annual report. The bill mandated that the report should include (but was not limited to) the following information:

9. List of courses offered through the virtual school;
10. Number of local school districts and number of the district students participating in the virtual school;
11. Private schools and number of the private school students participating in the virtual school;
12. Number of home-school students participating in the virtual school;
13. Success rates for students by courses enrolled in the virtual school;
14. Number of students who dropped a course and reasons for dropping;
15. Expenditures made for the virtual school; and
16. Number of students unable to enroll because of space limitation. (South Carolina General Assembly, 2007-2008, Virtual School Program, Section 59-16-60)

The remainder of this report was created to meet the requirements set forth by the SC Legislature.

Data Collection

The SCVSP utilizes the technological infrastructure of the Virtual School Administrator (VSA), a centralized registration system designed and run by the Florida Virtual School (FLVS), to collect data on student registration, course enrollment, and student outcomes. In addition, the SCVSP uses a variety of technologies and surveys to collect data on student/teacher interactions and student actions (i.e. reason for dropping a course, etc). The primary data used to conduct the analysis for this report were those collected from the VSA database.

The data were collected over three instructional "sessions" (i.e. Summer 2008, Fall 2008, Spring 2009). During the time period in which the data were being collected the SCVSP was in transition with regard to the organization's ability to download and use data collected by the VSA. Prior to the Summer 2008 session, the SCVSP was required to submit requests for their data to FLVS. Once a request for data was processed, the VSA would download the requested information to the SCVSP's server. Unfortunately, even though the VSA attempted to address the SCVSP's needs in a timely fashion, there was often a lag time between the request for data and the delivery of the information. In an attempt to address their inability to control the flow of information, the SCVSP has renegotiated their contract with the VSA and has created a process that gives them greater control over existing data. Consequently, the organization is in a much better position to access and use data as needed to make data driven decisions.

Data Analysis

The research team downloaded the primary data set from the VSA for analysis on May 22, 2009, after the Spring 2009 semester came to a close. The data were then subjected to a series of statistical analyses to meet the requirements of the General Assembly and to address additional issues that arose during the analytical process. The outcome of the statistical analysis yielded multiple findings that hold significance for the SCVSP; however, one finding related to the growth of the organization stood out as being of prime importance.

The SCVSP Shows Significant Growth in Year 2

Over the past 12 months, the SCVSP has experienced phenomenal growth with regard to individual student enrollments. An analysis of the data demonstrated that <u>6,830 individual students registered for one or more of the courses offered by the SCVSP during the 2008-2009 school year</u> (i.e. Summer '08, Fall '08, Spring '09). The analysis also revealed that the SCVSP experienced an unprecedented **80% growth** in individual student enrollments when compared to the 2007-2008 school year. This rate of growth was significantly higher than that of similar programs across the nation. Keeping Pace (2008) reported that approximately one third of the nations programs were growing at a rate of 50% annually; 15% were growing 25-50% annually; and another 15% were growing

10-25% annually.

It is important to note that data on the number of individual student registrations does not demonstrate the true demand on the South Carolina Virtual School Program at an organizational level. The number of course requests by each student (students can register for more than one course) provide a more accurate picture of the exigency facing the organization. Information on student course requests can be found on page 9 of this report. One thing is certain: the data clearly demonstrate that *virtual learning is gaining momentum in South Carolina.*

The following graph demonstrates the growth in the SCVSP student enrollments from the pilot year (2006-2007) through the current year (2008-2009).

South Carolina Virtual School Program

	Pilot Year	Year 1	Year 2
Enrollment	1116	3793	6830
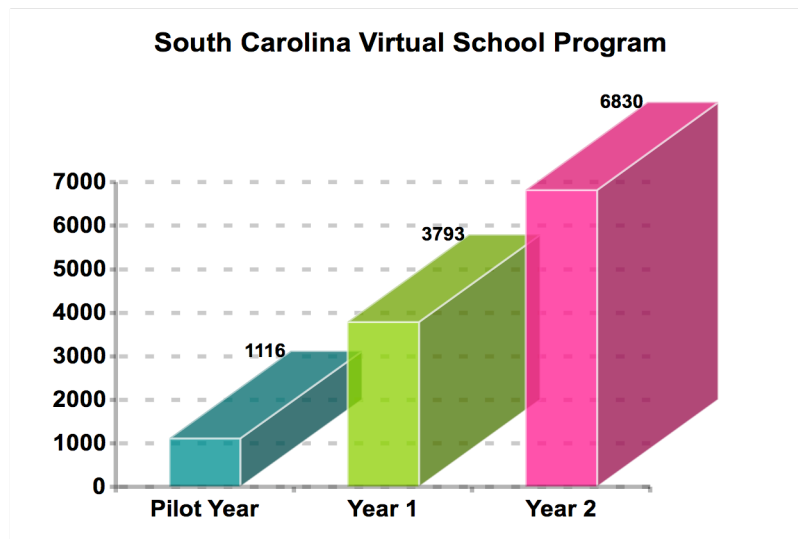
Factors Impacting Student Enrollment

The SCVSP enrollment data is not particularly surprising given that it is consistent with national data on the popularity of virtual learning. As virtual learning opportunities become more commonplace, confidence in their ability to provide a high quality education to meet the needs of a wide variety of learners has also increased. A recent report from (Watson & Gemin, 2009) stated:

> Online learning is growing rapidly as states and districts are creating new online schools, and existing programs are adding new courses and students. The growth reflects the spreading understanding that online courses and programs can serve a wide variety of students and needs.
> These include:

- Creating opportunities for small and rural school districts to

offer varied course subjects and highly qualified teachers to
their students;
- Allowing students to blend high school and post-secondary
learning options;
- Reducing class size;
- Helping students recover credits in an alternative learning
environment;
- Providing individualized instruction and unique learning
options;
- Allowing students the opportunity to interact with students far
beyond their school or town boundaries; and
- Meeting the needs and expectations of today's millennial
students. (p.3).

Similarly, a recent survey of U.S. School District Administrators (Picciano &
Seaman, 2008) provided insights into administrator thoughts regarding the value
of online and blended learning to meet the needs of their students. Picciano and
Seaman noted that administrators were of the belief that virtual learning might
prove most useful to address the following issues:

1. Meeting the needs of specific groups of students
2. Offering courses not otherwise available at the school
3. Offering Advanced Placement or college-level courses
4. Permitting students who failed a course to take it again
5. Reducing scheduling conflicts for students (p. 11)

Increase in District Enrollments
Data on public school enrollments suggest that district administrators across the
state value the educational opportunities provided by the SCVSP. The 2008-
2009 school year saw an increase in the number of school districts that chose to
take advantage of the courses offered by the SCVSP. As of May 22, 2009, the
state of South Carolina had a total of 86 school districts participating in the
SCVSP. Of those, 15 were new to the program. The new districts included:
Barnwell 45, Clarendon 2, Dillon 2, Florence 3, Jasper, Lee, Marion 1, Marion 7,
Marlboro, Saluda, Spartanburg 1, Spartanburg 2, Spartanburg 3, Sumter 2 and
the South Carolina Charter School District (which serves the entire state).
Consequently, by May 2009, every regular school district in the state of South
Carolina had chosen to utilize the SCVSP to meet the educational needs of
students they serve.

In addition to the increase in district enrollments, the SCVSP also served more
schools within each of the districts. Between May 2008 and May 2009 an
additional 78 public and charter schools enrolled students in the SCVSP. The
number of students enrolled in the SCVSP by district has been included in a
chart in the appendices (see Appendix B). The enrollment numbers include
middle and high school students as well as adults enrolled in the SCVSP Adult

Education program.

Increase in Home School and Private School Enrollments

Public school students and parents are not the only groups that value the educational opportunities afforded by South Carolina's Virtual School Program. Parents who have elected to educate their children in a home school or private school setting are increasingly attracted to the educational opportunities offered by the SCVSP. At the institutional level, data from 2008-2009 demonstrated an additional 23 private schools, and 17 home school groups chose the SCVSP as a vendor of choice. To date 34 private schools and 27 home schools have chosen to use the SCVSP to meet the educational needs of one or more of their students. At the individual student level, the SCVSP served 87 private school students and 31 home school students between May 2008 and May 2009.

Increase in Courses Offered by the SCVSP

According to a survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (2005), the primary reason districts chose to take advantage of opportunities for their students to engage in online learning is to increase course offerings that would otherwise be unavailable for their students. The survey also revealed that the second most commonly cited reason districts turn to virtual education is to meet the needs of individual learners.

To this end, the SCVSP offered 67 courses to support the educational needs of middle school students, high school students, and adults who were seeking to complete the credits required to earn their high school diploma. In addition to providing coursework to address core requirements and electives, the SCVSP also offered Advance Placement (AP) courses, Honors courses, Content Recovery (CR) courses, and courses designed to prepare students for the SAT. The SCVSP has announced that it will offer 7 new courses starting in September of 2009. Of the seven new offerings, five are AP courses. A list of course offerings can be found in the Appendices (see Appendix C). Lastly, the SCVSP is also in the process of creating a series of self-paced courses for students needing Content Recovery in Geometry CR, CR US History, CR Government, and CR Biology.

The popularity of online courses is evident both in the number of student enrollments and in the speed in which the courses fill up. For example, during the 2008-2009 school year the SCVSP focused their attention on offering a large number of courses to meet core requirements. At the same time, the organization was also working through the process of evaluating and adding new courses to their list of offerings. Spanish 1 and 2, Career and Technology Education courses, Fine Arts, and Physical Education courses were offered for the first time in January 2009. The Physical Education course filled quickly and proved to be so popular that the SCVSP opened two additional sections of the course for the 2009 Summer session. By mid May, the P.E. courses were filled to capacity with over 90 students enrolled.

Increase in the Number of Courses Requested by Individual Students

While the total number of student registrations provides one benchmark for evaluating the appeal of the South Carolina virtual learning environment, it does not demonstrate the true demand made upon the SCVSP at an organizational level (i.e. administrators, technicians, instructors, etc). Data for the 2008-2009 school year (Summer '08, Fall '08, Spring '09) show that 26% of the 6,830 students chose to register for more than one SCVSP course bringing the total number of course registrations to 9,051. The SCDE policy states that each student is allowed to take up to three (3) online courses per year. Requests to take more than the three full credits must be approved by a waiver of the existing policy.
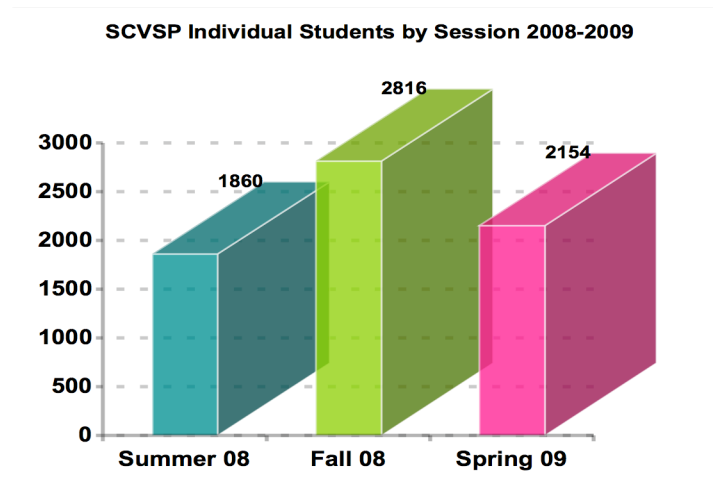
The majority of the course requests (93%) came from high school students in the South Carolina public and charter schools. An additional 3% of the requests for multiple courses came from students enrolled in adult education courses while the remaining 4% came from students enrolled in private and home schools. When data on individual students requests were further evaluated they demonstrated that 74% of the students registered for a single course, 21% students registered for 2 courses, 4% registered for 3 classes, and 1% register for 4 or more classes.

Increase in Requests to Support Special Projects

Even though the SCVSP is responsible for serving the day-to-day needs of students enrolled in its academic program, the organization also acts as the primary support for special projects offered by multiple South Carolina school districts. Of the 6,830 students enrolled in the SCVSP, more than 400 were from the following districts:

- Laurens 55 and Lexington 1 - Physical Science

- Laurens 55 and 56 - Algebra 1
- Allendale-Fairfax - Spanish
- Felton Lab School - Spanish
- Colleton County High - Spanish
- Oconee - Oracle.

Data indicate that the requests for primary and support services will continue to grow as more South Carolina school districts recognize that the SCVSP is a strategic partner in assisting in educating their students. For example, during the summer of 2009 the SCVSP will partner with Horry County and Greenville County Schools to offer Content Recovery courses to students in that district. The students served in the program will not be part of the regular enrollment for the SCVSP; instead they will fall under the category of "Special Projects."   The partnership is important in that the project is designed to meet the needs of students who are at risk of dropping out of school; however, the effort that it will take to support this initiative falls largely on the SCVSP.


Student Population

The South Carolina Virtual School Program was designed to provide online learning through a variety of delivery methods to compliment traditional high school curricula. All public, private, and home-schooled students (age 21 and younger), residing in South Carolina are eligible to enroll in online courses in order to gain the knowledge, skills, and credits required to earn a high school diploma. This approach enables the SCVSP to meet the educational needs of a diverse group of students.

Although virtual learning is relatively new to K-12, the attributes (e.g. anytime, anyplace, anywhere) of a virtual environment have the potential for providing unique opportunities for learning that would not be feasible in a traditional school environment. This thinking resonates with students of all backgrounds and draws a diverse group of learners to the virtual table. This is certainly the case in South Carolina. The following section of the report provides information on the students who have chosen to enroll in the SCVSP.

Gender and Race
An analysis of the SCVSP's database revealed that the SCVSP population was comparable to that of students enrolled in the South Carolina's traditional classrooms (SCDE, 2009). The data revealed that 43% of the population was male while 57% was female. Similarly, demographics comparing the ethnicity of the SCVSP student population with that of students found in South Carolina's brick and mortar settings demonstrated that the groups were almost identical (SCDE, 2009a). A breakdown of the SCVSP's students by race demonstrated that 37% were African American, 54% were Caucasian, with Asians, Hispanics,

and Native American's making up another 8%. Approximately 1% of the student population chose not to report their ethnic background.

SCVSP 2008-2009 Race
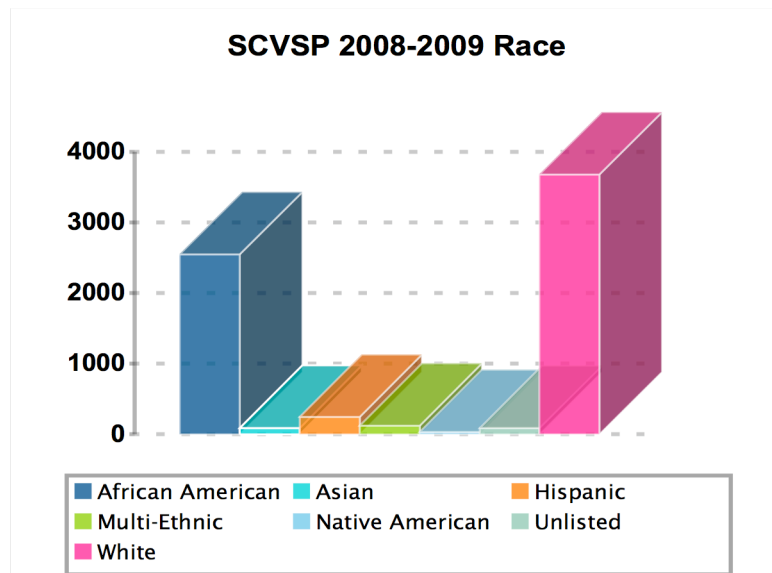
Primary Language
Federal law requires all students enrolled in public schools to complete a survey to identify the primary language spoken in the home. When a language other than English is the primary language spoken in the home, the student is identified as English as a Second Language (ESL). Data from the SCVSP demonstrate that 2% of the 2008-2009 student population spoke English as a second language. Some of the languages spoken by the SCVSP's ESL population included: German, Italian, Spanish, French, Chinese, Haitian Creole, and Japanese. This is an important finding because it demonstrates that instructors in the virtual learning environment and their colleagues in traditional schools face many of the same issues when it comes to meeting the needs of diverse group of students. With that said, the online learning environment offers some distinctive ways to address the challenges that come with serving unique student populations. Similarly, it is important to recognize that the United States is growing more and more diverse; thus, both instructors in traditional learning environments and virtual learning environments will need additional manpower and other resources to expand their services to address the needs of the wide range of students they serve.

Free and Reduced Lunch Program as Socio-Economic Indicator
An evaluation of the demographic data revealed that 34% of the public and charter school students enrolled in the SCVSP were enrolled in the Free and Reduced Lunch program. At this time the SCDE has not reported the number of students enrolled in the traditional school program so it is not possible to make a comparison to the overall SC school public and charter school population. Even so, the data are important in that they demonstrate that the SCVSP provides

services to students from all social-economic backgrounds. The SCVSP, like their counterparts in traditional school settings, must find ways to help students of all walks of life become successful learners.

Class Standing

The data clearly demonstrate opportunities for virtual learning is particularly appealing to high school seniors who are attempting to complete requirements for graduation. The data show that 53% of the students enrolled in SCVSP courses during the 2008-2009 school year (Summer '08, Fall '08, Spring 09 sessions) were high school seniors. When enrollments were evaluated by grade level across each session, the data demonstrate that high school seniors made up half of the total SCVSP student population. Interestingly, the data also show that 53% of the students enrolling in the summer program were seniors who were attempting to get a jump on earning the credits that are required for spring graduation. The data indicate that once school started in the fall, the enrollment for this group jumped to 55% of all the student enrollments. Enrollment numbers for high school seniors drop back down to 49% of the population off in the spring prior to graduation. These findings are not unexpected when one considers that when students enter school during the fall of their senior year they are constantly reminded that they must push to complete any remaining course credits in order to graduate in May. Consequently, the data clearly indicate that high school students view the SCVSP as a viable medium to address their educational needs in order to earn credits for high school graduation.

The next largest groups of students enrolling in the SCVSP for 2008-2009 were high school juniors. This group of students made up 26% of the total registrations for the given time period. Underclassmen (Sophomores and Freshmen) made up 20% of the registrants. The remaining 2% of the student enrollments was comprised primarily of students enrolled in adult education programs and a small number of middle school students.

Student Success

The primary goal for the SCVSP is to "provide a statewide supplemental or alternative online program for 9th-12th grade students by assuring equitable access to rich and varied learning opportunities for South Carolina students." (SCDE, 2009b). To this end, the SCVSP is particularly interested in helping students become successful learners as they acquire knowledge and skills through their participation in an online learning environment. For many students, the opportunity to take College Preparatory courses online offers several advantages, particularly in terms of flexibility of scheduling. Some students may find that the Honors courses or the Advanced Placement (AP) courses offered by the SCVSP are ones that are not available in their own district. For other students--those that have already failed a course--opportunities to participate in the Content Recovery program plays a vital role in their ability to earn a high

school diploma. Similarly, when a student has already failed a specific course in the traditional school setting, the novelty effect of a Content Recovery course in a virtual setting may be advantageous as the student's previous history of failure would not be associated with online learning. Consequently, some students may be willing to retake a class instead of dropping out of school, if they believed that a different learning environment offered a clean slate from which to try again.

Overview of Student Success for the 2008-2009 School Year

In January 2007, South Carolina's State Board of Education revised the 1999 South Carolina Uniform Grading Policy (UGP) for schools and programs serving students in grade 7 and higher taking courses for high school credit. The policy indicates that Grade Point Averages (GPA) of 70-100 are defined as a passing grade while grades of 69 or lower earn a failing grade. For purposes of this report, student success is defined as completing a course with a passing grade and earning the corresponding course credit through participation in the SCVSP. It is also important to note that it is common practice to eliminate any student who dropped a course during the drop period (i.e. grace period) before conducting an analysis. This is an accepted formula for determining success in virtual learning environments. Therefore, this formula has been used to determine the overall success of the SCVSP for the 2008-209 school year.

The findings on student success for the 2008-2009 school year (Summer '08, Fall '08, Spring '09) demonstrated that <u>after allowing for dropped courses 64% of the students enrolled in the SCVSP passed the course in which they were enrolled.</u> The data also show that 26% of the students completed a course but earned a failing grade while another 9% withdrew from the course after the grace period also earning a failing grade. Consequently, the data revealed that even though 64% passed, more than a third of the students who remained in a course after the 10-day grace/drop period failed. Lastly, the findings indicate that less than 1% of the students (all of whom were enrolled in the spring session) are still in the process of completing course requirements. For purposes of this report, the data have been broken down by course type and by session to provide a more in-depth understanding of student success. Please note that the data on student success includes the combined outcomes for both high school students and students' age 21 and younger who are enrolled in adult education courses.

Sessions

It is important to note that while the SCVSP is not specifically designed to follow traditional school "semesters," online courses generally start in conjunction with traditional school semesters. Typically, the SCVSP offers two enrollment periods in the fall (September and October); two in the spring (January and February); and one in the summer (June). A typical course runs between 14 to 16 weeks during the school year while a summer course generally lasts 8 weeks. For purposes of this report, data from September and October terms were compiled and listed as the Fall '08 session. Similarly, the 8-week summer term was listed

as Summer '08, and the early spring session is described as the Spring 2009 session.

The following section of the report provides information on student success by course type (i.e. AP, Honors, College Preparatory, Content Recovery). Please note that in determining success by course type, the number of students who chose to drop the course were not excluded from the analysis, as it is important to determine if course type impacts drops.

Summer 2008 Session By Course Type

Given that the summer session is a short one, there were no Honors or AP courses offered. There were a total of 643 students enrolled in Content Recovery courses during the summer session. Another 1,920 students enrolled in College Preparatory courses. The success rate for both College Preparatory and CR courses is given in the graphs below.
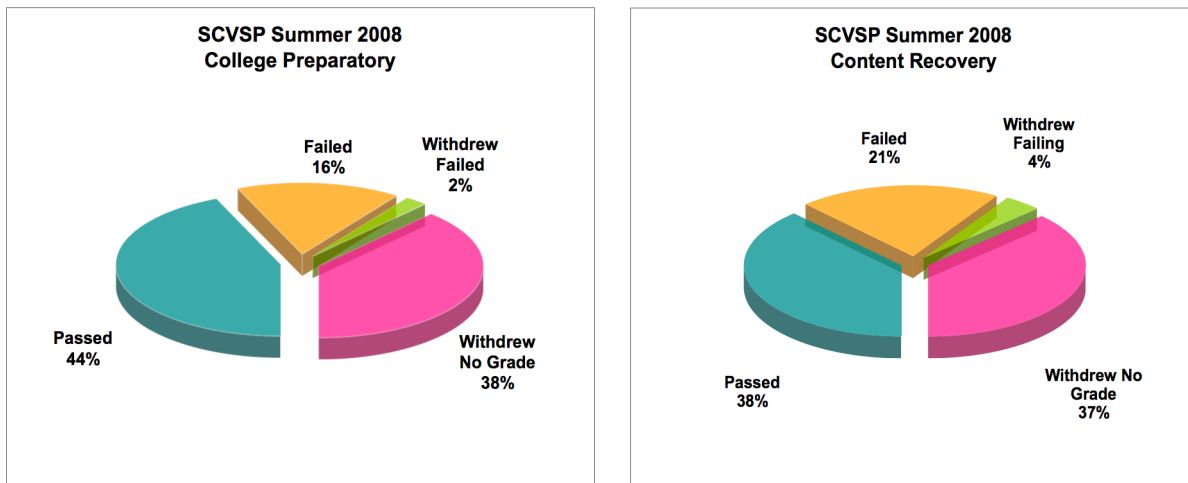
Fall 2008 Session by Course Type

During the fall semester the SCVSP offered College Preparatory courses, Content Recovery courses, Honors courses and AP courses. The breakdown of the success rates is given for each of these groups in the graphs below.

SCVSP Fall 2008
Advanced Placement

Withdrew No Grade 76%
Passed 24%

SCVSP Fall 2008
Content Recovery

Withdrew Failing 9%
Failed 10%
Withdrew No Grade 58%
Passed 23%

SCVSP Fall 2008
Honors

Failed 7%
Withdrew Failing 2%
Passed 60%
Withdrew No Grade 31%

SCVSP Fall 2008
College Preparatory

Failed 18%
Withdrew Failing 8%
Passed 40%
Withdrew No Grade 34%
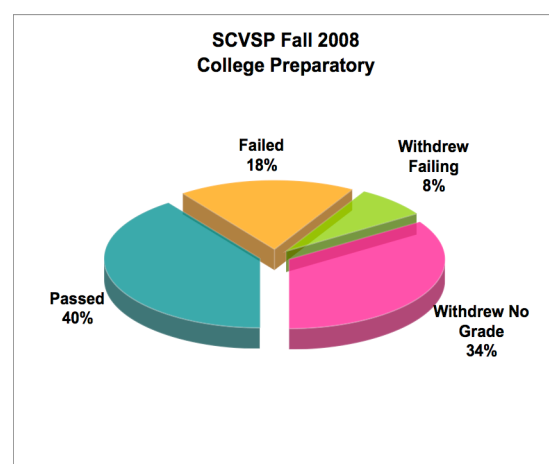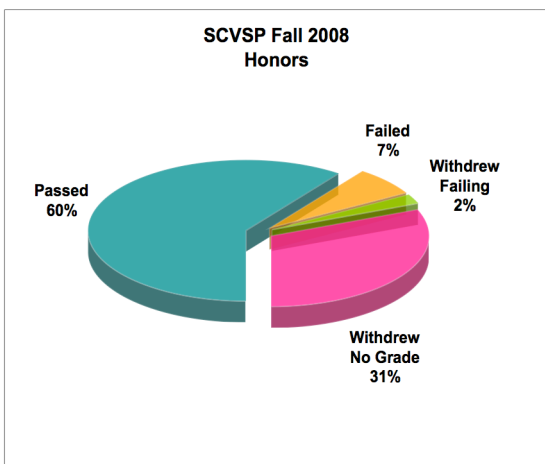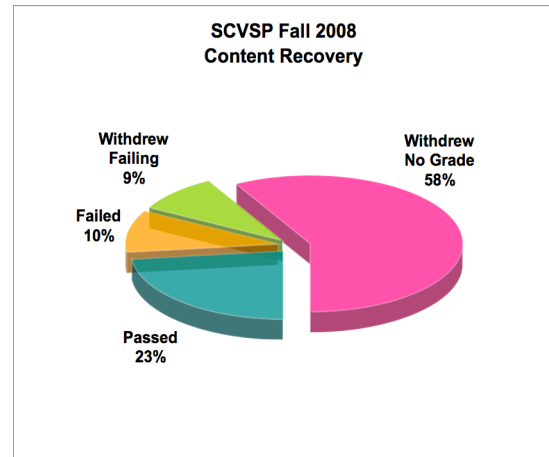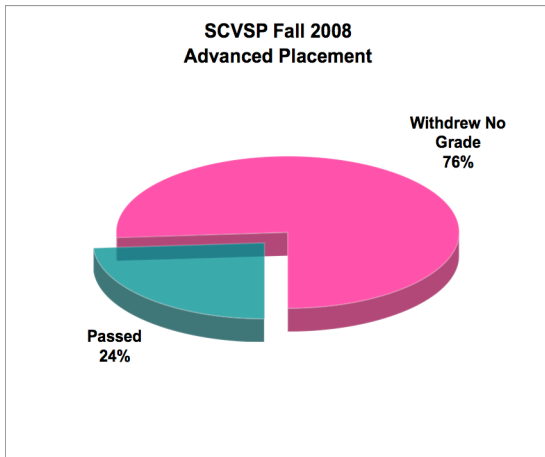
Spring 2009 Session by Course Type

During the Spring '09 session, the SCVSP offered Honors classes, Content Recovery courses and College Preparatory courses to meet the educational needs of South Carolina students. The data below show the success rates of students in each of these categories.

SCVSP Spring 2009
Content Recovery

Withdrew Failing 7%
Failed 9%
Withdrew No Grade 58%
Passed 20%
Still Active 6%

SCVSP Spring 2009
College Preparatory

Failed 14%
Withdrew Failing 5%
Passed 45%
Still Active 2%
Withdrew No Grade 34%

SCVSP Spring 2009
Honors

Passed 60%
Failed 11%
Withdrew Failing 3%
Withdrew No Grade 26%
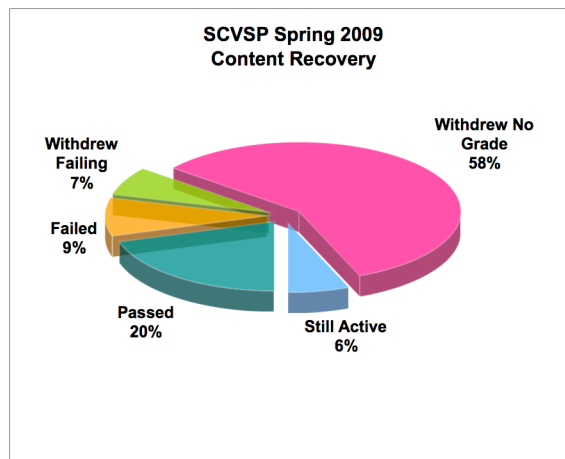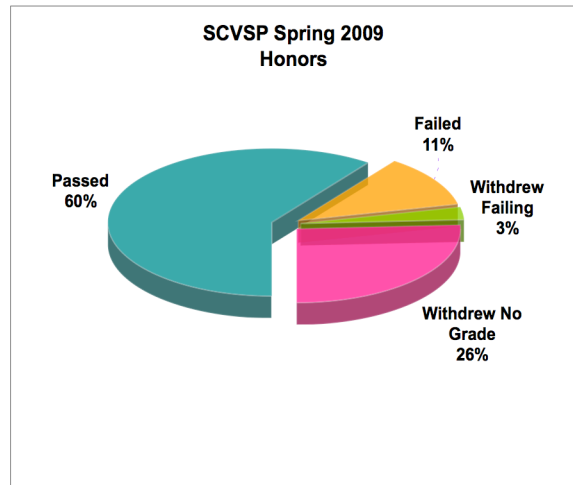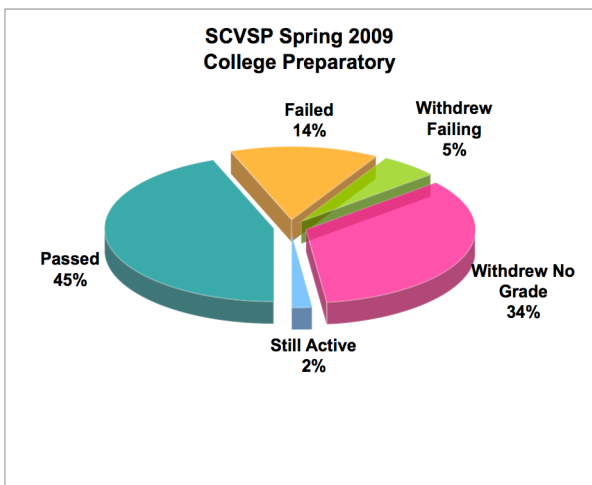
Dropped Courses

As the SCVSP completes its second full year of operation they still find themselves as pioneers in the field of on-line and blended learning in South Carolina. The reality is that most school administrators, teachers, sponsors/guidance counselors, and students are just beginning to explore the world of virtual learning. As these groups become more familiar with online and blended learning, they will gain both a better appreciation for the program and they will be in a better position to aligning their expectations for students with the programs offerings. Until that happens, SCVSP administrators recognize that students may have misconceptions regarding online learning (i.e. data from Y1 demonstrate coursework is more demanding than students expect it to be, etc). Thus, SCVSP administrators know that they must provide a way for individuals to exit the program should they find the course did not meet their expectations. In addition, program administrators are aware that other issues could possibly arise that would require a student to drop a course. To this end, the SCVSP provides an option for students to withdraw from the program in the first 10 days of a course without penalty to their grade or class standing. This process is one in which students essentially "drop" a course.

Data collected during the 2008-2009 school year demonstrated that 3366 students chose to drop a course without penalty during the first 10 days of class. This represents 37% of all the students who registered for one or more courses through the SCVSP. An additional 497 students chose to drop a course after the 10-day grace period. It is important to note that students who chose to drop a course *after* the 10 day drop period earned a failing grade (F) in the course. This group of students represents 25% of all the failures reported during the 3 sessions in which data were analyzed. Thus, the overall drop data (combining those that dropped during the grace period with those withdrawing with a failing grade) is 3863 students or 43%.

There are several possible reasons as to why the number of students who drop courses is so high, but unfortunately there is very little data to confirm any of the possible theories. For example, the data collected for the Y1 Report revealed that many of the dropped courses resulted from the actions of sponsors/guidance counselors at the student's physical school of origin during the registration process. Most of the issues that arise resulted from sponsors willfully choosing to ignore the protocol that were in place to facilitate the registration process. Specifically, when students were attempting to register for courses that were already full, some sponsors advised the student to register for the same course but with a different course type (i.e. registering for a Content Recovery History course rather than a College Preparatory History course). When the student was then placed in the "alternative" course based on the information given during the registration process, he or she would contact the SCVSP to ask for help in correcting an "error" that was made during registration.

During Y1 the SCVSP personnel were so intent on supporting students that they typically overrode the existing system and found a way to enroll the student in a class that was already full. Thus, students and sponsors were rewarded for their inappropriate behavior when a slot was created for a student in a closed course. As a result, many sponsors believed they had found a way to circumvent the system creating scheduling problems for personnel at the SCVSP. The number of man-hours spent rescheduling students and teachers lost time that could have been spent on more meaningful tasks. In addition, as word of the "solution" circulated among the sponsors the problem expanded until it was untenable.

After the problems related to course registration were identified at the end of Year 1, the SCVSP changed their policy and began to turn students away when courses they were registering for were filled to capacity. The SCVSP also notified sponsors and reminded them that they were personally and ultimately responsible for making sure students had registered for the correct course prior to issuing their approval for the student to complete the enrollment process. This information was given to sponsors through multiple verbal and written communications. Additionally, written notices were placed in conspicuous places in areas in which students would go register for SCVSP courses. Unfortunately, the problem persisted as sponsors continued to attempt to override the system. As reported in the Y1 report, "…there are no negative consequences for [sponsors] who make repeated "mistakes" in the registration process even though their actions place a drain on the SCVSP's limited personnel and resources." (Williams Glaser & Mulkey, 2008, p. 26.)
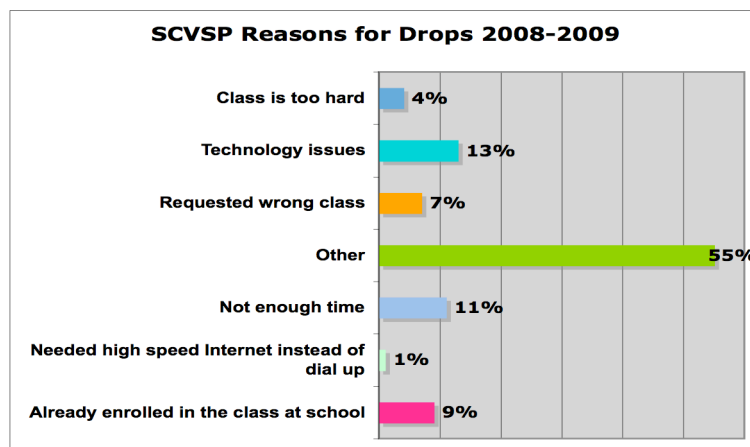
While there is a lot to be said for the SCVSP's original attempt to create an opening for every student who wished to enroll in the SCVSP, the reality is that the model that the organization originally chose to follow (rescheduling each and every individual student by hand) was neither viable nor scalable over time.

The subsequent change in policy for Y2 demonstrated that the administrators chose to take a proactive approach to address the problem. With that said, the data seem to bear witness to the fact that it will take several sessions for sponsors to recognize that they must take full responsibility for registering students for the correct courses. Until that shift occurs it is likely that the number of dropped courses will remain high.

It is also important to note that the high demand for online learning creates a scenario in which students and their sponsors are often willing to "push the envelope" in hopes of gaining a slot in one of the highly sought virtual courses.

While the data indicate many of the dropped courses were a result of some sponsors attempting to manipulate the system, those are not the only reasons students dropped a course. In an effort to better determine why students were dropping courses the SCVSP instituted a "Drop Form" in Y2 for students to complete before they exited the program (see Appendix D). Unfortunately, even though the SCVSP received 3842 completed drop forms, the "reasons for dropping" was still unclear because 55% of the students selected "Other" as their reason for dropping a course.   As such, the drop form did not prove to have any value in helping program administrators assess the reasons students were withdrawing from online courses.

An analysis of the existing data (from the drop forms) can be seen below. Again, this data is <u>exceptionally limited</u> in its ability to provide reliable information regarding the student's reasons for dropping. This is due to the designation of "Other" (more than half the data) represents a lack of information.

SCVSP Reasons for Drops 2008-2009

Reason	Percent
Class is too hard	4%
Technology issues	13%
Requested wrong class	7%
Other	55%
Not enough time	11%
Needed high speed Internet instead of dial up	1%
Already enrolled in the class at school	9%

In addition several sponsors chose to use the drop form as a communications tool to negotiate course or student transcript changes rather than use the form for the purpose for which it was intended. By choosing to use the form inappropriately, sponsors cost the SCVSP valuable time and eliminated

opportunities for the SCVSP to collect data needed to determine why students chose to drop courses.

Demand Outstripping Resources

Inability to Meet Demand
Like other states, South Carolina is facing increased demand for virtual learning to meet students' academic needs. During the 2008-2009 school year, the SCVSP staff reported that 4,558 students were unable to enroll in online courses due to space limitations. As described in the previous section on Dropped Courses, students and their sponsors found some very "creative" ways to try to gain entrance into the SCVSP. Thus, 3,842 students enrolled and dropped a course while 4,558 students were denied entrance to the program. These data show two things: (1) The SCVSP must secure additional personnel and resources in order to meet the needs of students in South Carolina; and (2) it is imperative that sponsors at the students home school take responsibility for accurately qualifying and scheduling students for SCVSP courses. In an era where school dropouts are considered the nations "Silent Epidemic" (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006) it is encouraging to see that students in South Carolina are doing everything possible to break through the virtual doors to gain entrance into South Carolina's Virtual School Program.

Organizational Infrastructure
Over the past year, there have been increases in both the SCVSP's administrative and instructional staff. Even so, the data on the growth of the organization demonstrate that the SCVSP must continue to secure additional physical and human resources to meet increasing demands on the organization. In doing so, the SCVSP will be able to address issues of growth while continuing to provide high quality instructional opportunities for their existing students.

Technical Infrastructure
The National Forum on Educational Statistics (2006) reports that virtual education is unique in that it uses information and communication technologies to help students connect with teachers, peers, and their instructional materials in ways that transcend traditional limitations of time and space with respect to students' relationships with teachers, peers, and instructional materials. Clearly, the success of this type of learning environment is highly dependent on the technical infrastructure that is available to support all aspects of the organization—particularly those involving student/teacher communication.

The SCVSP's technical infrastructure is made up of 3 major components: registration (VSA), course management and delivery (Learning Management System) and tools. The following list provides an overview of some of the technology-based resources that the SCVSP uses to support student learning.

- Elluminate - web conferencing, instant messaging, live video support, polling, etc.
- SKYPE - instant messaging, sharing files, group collaboration, etc.
- StreamlineSC and Knowitall.org
- Gizmos-Virtual Math and Science labs
- Online, interactive textbooks that are state adopted and standard aligned.
- TypingMaster - web based Keyboarding instruction with analysis and WAM reporting.
- Speech recording for foreign language courses; student's record enunciation for teacher to review.
- USA TestPrep-online test preparation program for courses requiring an EOCE.
- OneCall - calling, polling, and messaging for student, sponsors, staff, etc.
- Atomic Learning Videos-web-based software training and curriculum resources for more than 110 applications. Tutorials used by SCVSP include Microsoft Office Products, E-Mail, Blackboard, Moodle, Internet, Adobe InDesign, Dreamweaver, etc.
- ERO - Electronic Registrar Online for SCVSP teachers to attend staff development, meetings, etc.
- Jing - Create instructional video tutorials on any subject content.
- Podcasts - used in courses to address diverse learning styles.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The national picture shows virtual learning is becoming more commonplace in the educational arena. Similarly, the data from South Carolina demonstrate that school and district administrators across the state are turning toward virtual learning to solve a variety of issues. Although, the SCVSP is showing great promise, it is still a young organization and like most new organizations the SCVSP is dealing with growing pains around staffing, infrastructure and course offerings. Adding to these challenges, the SCVSP is experiencing unprecedented growth in enrollments. Thus, the SCVSP's third year of operation will be a pivotal one with regard to issues related to scalability and student outcomes.

Research has demonstrated that one of the hurdles that virtual schools must face is the reality that there are very few resources to use as a guide as they attempt to build a program from scratch (Watson & Gemin, 2009). As such, the organizations are on their own as they attempt to build and run the program while climbing a steep learning curve. This research also stated that one of the biggest challenges virtual schools face as they grow and evolve over time is the issue of scalability. This issue is one of the major challenges facing the SCVSP as the organization starts into Year 3.

In addition to providing an update on the status of the SCVSP, the research team has offered several recommendations for consideration as the South Carolina General Assembly continues their push to strengthen the educational opportunities for all citizens across the state.

At this time the SCVSP needs to focus heavily on: (1) increasing student success for all students regardless of course type (i.e. AP, Honors, College Preparatory, and Content Recovery courses); (2) decreasing the number of students who drop courses; and (3) creating long term-scalable solutions to a variety of problems that place a drain on the organizations limited resources.

Based on the research findings and the current environment, the research team suggests that the SCVSP pursue funding to address the following recommendations:

- Establish viable instruments to collect meaningful data to enable the organization to make data driven decisions (i.e. create new surveys to evaluate reasons students are dropping courses, look into relationship between teacher actions and student success, etc).

- Explore barriers to student success with regard to establishing the correlation between the specific instructional environment (i.e. resources available depending on instructional delivery method utilized for specific course) and student teacher interactions to ensure all students have an equal opportunity to successfully complete their on-line course to earn credit toward their high school diploma.

- Evaluate processes and policies at the organizational level to determine if the current manpower and processes involved are scalable over time as the organization continues to grow.

- Work with SCDE and local school districts to create a mechanism to discourage manipulation of the existing registration system thereby freeing up the SCVSP's physical and human resources to enable them to focus on student outcomes

- Explore methods to fund the SCVSP's continued involvement with high quality special projects and other activities that may negatively impact the organizations limited resources.

Summary

While the data provide compelling evidence for the need to continue to support the SCVSP, it is important to remember that individual students and teachers are really the heart of the organization. Therefore, it is important to consider their needs and to, whenever possible, allow these individuals to voice their thoughts on the organization. The following comments were designed to do just that.

Message received from a virtual instructor to the SCVSP staff:

> Just wanted to let you know that I used *One Call Now* again yesterday to remind students that there are only 2 weeks left in class, and that if they have any outstanding work, they need to get moving. I have gotten results like never before this way! More kids have contacted me about my voice message than they EVER did with VSA messages. And even if they don't answer the phone, I can still get them the info they need. It's WONDERFUL!

Message sent to the SCVSP staff from a student:

> I'm not just saying this when I say that I really did learn ALOT these past few weeks! I want to thank you for working with us to make sure that everyone did well in the class"; or a note from a parent, "The students, parents, and D.O.E. of South Carolina should all be proud to know how wonderful the SCVSP is because of all of the hard work of yourselves, and others like you *(Dr. Christmas et. al.)! If they only knew...*

APPENDIX A

Background of SCVSP

The South Carolina Legislature officially established the South Carolina Virtual School Program in May 2007; however, the events leading up to the creation of the SCVSP program began two years earlier with the South Carolina High School Redesign Commission.

In May 2005, the state superintendent and community leaders convened the South Carolina High School Redesign Commission to study the latest research on high school initiatives that promote high achievement and to make recommendations for future state action. Business and community leaders, parents, pre K–12 educators, and representatives from higher education spent months evaluating research and visiting high schools to determine the most effective strategies.

The Commission's findings revealed that South Carolina high schools need to focus their efforts on three key strategies: (a) increasing the graduation rate, (b) providing students with the skills to become lifelong learners, and (c) producing graduates with the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in college and the workforce. The Commission further recommended that the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) take the following steps to accomplish these goals: 1) expand and accelerate opportunities for students who are actively engaged in their education; 2) fully engage students who are just muddling through school; and 3) recover students who are so far behind and disengaged that they are at risk of dropping out.

Similarly, one of the strategies recommended by the Commission was to, "…*fund alternative pathways to graduation to assist students who are behind academically and to foster individual progression through high school.* Options for alternative pathways should include the following:

- *virtual high schools* to enhance classroom learning, equalize opportunities among districts, and promote individual progression through school;

- content-recovery labs provided during or after the school day to enable students who have fallen behind to complete courses and get back on track; and

- extend the school day or school year programs to meet increasing expectations and goals and to ensure that students have opportunities to

catch up, keep up, and get ahead with academic course work (South Carolina High School Redesign Commission, Chapter 4, page 25, item 4).

In response to the recommendations made, the SCDE and the Office of High School Redesign launched the SCDE Online Learning Committee in November of 2005. Representation included participants from all areas of the Department of Education, districts, higher education, community, and business. The objective was to inform the group of online learning opportunities for students and start discussion on how to plan and implement online learning statewide.

In January 2006, South Carolina district virtual school initiatives were presented to the SCDE Online Learning Committee. This session included presentations by six SC districts who currently offered online learning for their students: Lexington 1, Richland 2, York 3, Orangeburg 4, Greenville, and Horry County School Districts. Presenters covered "best practices" and "lessons learned" and also took part in a panel discussion allowing for questions by attendees.

In February 2006, a core group from the SCDE Online Learning Committee also attended a Florida Virtual School Leadership Training seminar at Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College. The meeting was designed to explore models for the organization and operations of the virtual school. Topics included virtual school models, identifying needs, funding and budgeting, gaining stakeholders, establishing policies, and ensuring quality online curriculum.

In March, the SCDE Online Learning Committee joined hands with the Education Development Center (EDC) to conduct a strategy session designed to assist SC in developing a state virtual school plan. The EDC Online Learning Planning was held over a six-week period involving forty participants from K-12 education, government, business, higher education, and community entities.

The following May 2006, the SCDE launched the *South Carolina Virtual School Pilot* to explore the feasibility of a statewide virtual school. The pilot was designed to give the SCDE the opportunity to test its online learning course management system (Blackboard), registration system, and quality assurance measures. More broadly, the pilot gave the SCDE an opportunity to gauge the need for and response to the program around the state. Additionally, the pilot helped gauge the Department's strength in supporting the South Carolina High School Redesign Commission's recommendation for the use of virtual learning to meet legislative mandates to give all students equitable access to high-quality instruction.

Ten school districts, each with existing virtual school programs and experience in developing, providing, and supporting online courses collaborated with the SCDE on the pilot project. Consequently, students throughout the state had the opportunity to enroll in 30 different virtual school courses, including Algebra, Algebra II, Geometry, English I & II, Web Design, and Sociology through the pilot

program. Funding from the state pilot program allowed each district to provide 20 seats free of charge to students.

In selecting these courses, the SCDE reviewed virtual school provider wares and chose the courses whose content most closely aligned with South Carolina standards. Courses were taught by online certified teachers and required an onsite mentor to help facilitate the courses.

To assist in understanding the impact of the pilot, the SCDE contracted with the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) to conduct an evaluation of the pilot. The resulting evaluation stated, "There are great benefits to having students able to take a class when it is needed, and without having to incur unnecessary time and expense. The challenge then is to retain the advantages of "anywhere, anytime" learning while bringing the necessary instructional scaffolding to those students who require it." Of 139 students surveyed, 75% of the respondents stated that online learning environments were not what they initially envisioned when they first registered for the course. Of the group, 80 students provided additional information to further clarify their thinking. Fifty-five percent of the students stated that the course was harder than they had initially expected while another 29% stated that they needed more assistance from the teacher. Thirteen percent of the respondents specifically mentioned that the pace was faster than anticipated. Not surprisingly, many students noted that they clearly had no previous concepts as to what they should expect from an online learning environment. Interestingly, some students reported that they were surprised to find they did not have a "real" teacher to help them. Similarly, other students were surprised that the course involved quizzes (ISTE, 2007, page 16).

The final ISTE report offered a list of suggestions to improve the virtual school learning experience:

- Preparation and counseling prior to student enrollment
- Student support while in classes
- Adequate training and orientation for teachers
- Adequate technical infrastructure and support
- Content development and coordination
- Relationship between state and districts
  (ISTE, 2007, section Discussion on Findings, pages 23-24).

In addition to the ISTE evaluation, the SCDE contracted with NACOL (North American Council for Online Learning) to conduct an online Needs Assessment. The target audiences for the assessment were the "school customers" of the state-led virtual school. This included school counselors, assistant principals, principals, directors of curriculum, and other district personnel as appropriate. The questions in the assessment were grouped into three categories:

- Baseline information about the responding school/district

- Current usage of online courses and services
- Level of need and interest in online courses and services.

When the Need Assessment was released in 2007 seven (7) key findings were revealed:

- Over 50% of respondents' stated that utilization of online learning was a part of their school's overall school improvement/academic plan; with another 44% saying that online learning was a "very important" part of their overall improvement plan;
- The two most commonly cited reasons as to why schools/districts chose to use online courses were:
  - To offer "catch up" curriculum for high school students
  - To increase graduation rates;
- The participation rate of online courses for content-recovery purposes is approximately 70%; with approximately 55% also using online courses for first-time full credit courses;
- The reason most commonly given for students NOT enrolling in online courses is due to a lack of student awareness that online opportunities exist;
- Providing online courses and remediation to students who were unsuccessful in a traditional classroom setting and for students needing remediation is rated as the highest need for online learning to address;
- English I and Algebra I are identified as the courses in which online Content Recovery is most needed; and
- Algebra I is the subject in which online remediation opportunities are most needed (North American Council for Online Learning, 2007).

While the pilot was underway, Representatives Rice and Walker--members of the House of Representative Committee on Education and Public Works pre-filed a motion on December 13, 2006 to establish the *South Carolina Virtual School Program.* On January 9, 2007 the bill was introduced as HJ-57. During the months that followed, the SCDE and the House Committee on Education and Public Works met to define terms and gather a better understanding of how the program would work statewide, what type of funding was needed, and what type of support would be required for this project.

In May 2007 the South Carolina Legislature voted to adopt Bill H3097 which stated:

> *"An act to amend the code of laws of South Carolina, 1976, by adding chapter 16 to title 59 so as to provide that the State Department of Education is authorized to **establish the South Carolina Virtual School Program**, to provide requirements and procedures for the virtual school program, to provide for certain online course credits, to provide for the students eligible to participate in the program and for the qualifications of teachers and*

instructors in the program, to provide for an online pilot program to determine the feasibility of providing the virtual school program to students enrolled in adult education programs, to provide for an annual report to the general assembly by the state department of education on the program and for other duties of the department of education in regard to the program, and to provide that implementation of the program is contingent on funding being provided by the general assembly."
(South Carolina General Assembly, 2007-2008, A26, R48, H3097)

The Legislature allocated $3.2 million in reoccurring funds in support of the virtual school program with the caveat that the funding for the program would be re-evaluated on an annual basis.

APPENDIX B

SCVSP Enrollments by Session
Summer 08 – Spring 09*

School Type	Summer 08	Fall 08	Spring 09	Total
Public School Districts				
Abbeville	2	2		4
Aiken	47	54	47	148
Allendale	1	171	40	212
Anderson 1	8	11	14	33
Anderson 2	4		3	7
Anderson 3	9	10	9	28
Anderson 4	34	18	18	70
Anderson 5	112	94	55	261
Bamberg 1	2	6	4	12
Bamberg 2	1	6	6	13
Barnwell 19		1	7	8
Barnwell 29	12	20	15	47
Barnwell 45	9	10	9	28
Beaufort	64	123	89	276
Berkeley	50	77	93	220
Calhoun	11	7	2	20
Charleston	143	167	141	451
Cherokee		1		1
Chester	4	13	3	20
Chesterfield	35	38	16	89
Clarendon 1	1			1
Clarendon 2		1		1
Clarendon 3		1		1
Colleton	10	104	43	157
Darlington	47	54	60	161
Dillon 1	11	4	7	22
Dillon 2		9	19	28
Dorchester 2	4	23	28	55
Dorchester 4		1	2	3
Edgefield	21	11	14	46
Fairfield		1	3	4
Florence 1	17	45	39	101
Florence 3			21	21
Florence 4				0*
Florence 5				0*
Georgetown	3	20	19	42
Governor's School	26	16	3	45

SCVSP Enrollments by Session
Summer 08 – Spring 09*

School Type	Summer 08	Fall 08	Spring 09	Total
Greenville	236	321	313	870
Greenwood 50	3	5	5	13
Greenwood 51	1			1
Greenwood 52	1	1	2	4
Hampton 1		1		1
Hampton 2		4		4
Horry	52	91	100	243
Jasper				0*
John de la Howe		8		8
Kershaw	24	58	58	140
Lancaster	18	29	20	67
Laurens 55	8	114	31	153
Laurens 56	11	63	14	88
Lee	1	15	5	21
Lexington 1	42	76	47	165
Lexington 2	25	24	23	72
Lexington 3	3	9	1	13
Lexington 4	9	21	16	46
Lexington 5	224	139	186	549
Marion 1			1	1
Marion 2				0*
Marion 7				0*
Marlboro	2	10	4	16
Newberry	25	30	23	78
Oconee	27	27	20	74
Orangeburg 3	6	18	9	33
Orangeburg 4	26	31	23	80
Orangeburg 5	5	12	13	30
Pickens	42	110	74	226
Richland 1	127	103	69	299
Richland 2	10	15	3	28
Rock Hill		13	1	14
Saluda		1	13	14
Spartanburg 1	14		1	15

SCVSP Enrollments by Session
Summer 08 – Spring 09*

School Type	Summer 08	Fall 08	Spring 09	Total
Spartanburg 2	5	10	5	20
Spartanburg 3	1	2	1	4
Spartanburg 4				0*
Spartanburg 5	1	8	5	14
Spartanburg 6	8	18	9	35
Spartanburg 7		2	1	3
Sumter 2		2	1	3
Sumter 17	43	42	34	119
Union	1	3		4
Williamsburg	7	4	7	18
York 1	4	1	16	21
York 2	69	96	86	251
York 3	2	8	2	12
York 4	5	10	8	23
South Carolina Public Charter Schools District	1	11	2	14
Adult Education				
Multi-District - Adult Education				
Bamberg	1			1
Clarendon		1		1
Dillon			1	1
Dorchester		2		2
Felton Lab		23	1	24
Lexington 2	3	2	5	10
Lexington 4				
Oconee		1		1
Spartanburg		2	3	5
Non-Public Schools				
Private School	69	86	56	211
Home School	10	14	7	31
Totals	**1860**	**2816**	**2154**	**6830**

*In addition, the names of 8 adult education centers where two or more districts came together to form one educational facility have been listed separately to provide a complete picture of the enrollment data by session (the chart also includes enrollments by non-public entities).

APPENDIX C

SCVSP Course Offerings 2008-2009

SCVS Algebra 1
SCVS Algebra 2
SCVS AP Statistics
SCVS Art History
SCVS Biology
SCVS Business Systems Computer Application
SCVS Business Systems Keyboard
SCVS Calculus
SCVS Chemistry
SCVS Child Development 1
SCVS Child Development 2
SCVS CR Algebra 1
SCVS CR Algebra 2
SCVS CR Biology
SCVS CR Chemistry
SCVS CR Economics
SCVS CR English 1
SCVS CR English 2
SCVS CR English 3
SCVS CR English 4
SCVS CR Geometry
SCVS CR Government
SCVS CR Physical Science
SCVS CR US History
SCVS Desktop Publishing
SCVS Economics
SCVS English 1 CP: Literary Studies
SCVS English 1 Honors: Literary Analysis
SCVS English 2 CP: Thematic Studies
SCVS English 2 Honors: Thematic Analysis
SCVS English 3 CP: American Lit Studies
SCVS English 3 Honors: American Lit
SCVS English 4 CP: British Lit Studies
SCVS English 4 Honors: British/World Lit
SCVS Family Life Education 1
SCVS Family Life Education 2
SCVS General Calculus
SCVS Geography
SCVS Geometry
SCVS Global Business
SCVS Government
SCVS Health Science Technology 1
SCVS HSAP English Language Arts Learning Path
SCVS HSAP Mathematics Learning Path

SCVS Human Growth and Development: Responsible Life
SCVS Intro to Health Science Technology
SCVS Latin I
SCVS Latin II
SCVS Marketing
SCVS Math Tech I
SCVS Medical Terminology
SCVS Music History
SCVS Oracle Programming in SQL
SCVS Pharmacy Technology
SCVS Physical Education 1
SCVS Physical Science
SCVS Physics
SCVS SAT Critical Reading
SCVS SAT Math
SCVS Sociology
SCVS Spanish I
SCVS Spanish II
SCVS Statistics
SCVS US History and Constitution
SCVS Web Design

Coming September 2009

SCVS AP Art History
SCVS AP Literature
SCVS AP Language
SCVS AP US History
SCVS AP Calculus
SCVS Forensic Science
SCVS Integrated Business Applications

APPENDIX D

South Carolina Virtual School Program Drop Form

Course Drop Form

[_____] Student First Name   [_____] Student Last Name

[_____] Email Address   [_____] Student Phone Number

[SCVS Algebra 1 ▼] Course Name

[Appleby, Alice ▼] Teacher

☐ School Not listed / Home Schooled / Not Applicable

District:
[Please Select Your District: ▼]

School:
[Please Select Your School:]

[_____] School Phone Number   [_____] Student ID #

[_____] Parent Name   [_____] Parent Phone #

[_____] Home Address   [_____] Course Start Date (mm/dd/yy)

[_____] City   [_____] State

[_____] Zip

[Technology issues ▼] Reason for dropping?

[_____] Other Reason for dropping?

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GLOSSARY

Active (enrollment) – An approved student, assigned to a course and actively participating.

Adult education – Programs that serve students (17 yrs and older) who have officially withdrawn from their regular high schools before completing their high school diploma.

Advanced Placement (AP) – The AP program is run by the College Board, a non-profit organization (http://www.collegeboard.com). High School students can earn college credit by passing the AP Exam with a grade of 3 or higher.

Alternative School – Schools created within the district to meet the needs of students that cannot conform to the norms of a traditional learning environment. For a student to be placed in the district's alternative school, their school administrator must make a formal request, followed by a hearing in which a group of professional educators and psychologist(s) review the student's files. All districts have established alternative schools.

Charter School – Charter schools are publicly funded US elementary or secondary schools in which part of the rules, regulations, and statutes that apply to other public schools have been waived in exchange for some type of accountability for producing certain results.

Classroom assigned – This occurs when the SCVSP has assigned a student to a class but the student has not yet begun taking the course, (i.e. student assigned to begin the course the next semester).

Complete – This term is used when a student completes a course in the allotted time. Once the course is complete, students that have earned a passing grade receive course credits for their efforts. No credit is given for failing grades.

Continuing –This term is used when a student continues in a course beyond the scheduled session end date. In some cases a course may continue over multiple sessions

Course request complete –When a student completes all the steps required to register for a course in the SCVSP, but is still waiting to be placed in a course (e.g. Classroom Assigned), they are referred to as falling within the status of "course request complete."

Content Recovery (CR) –CR courses are designed for students that have previously taken a course (via traditional classrooms or virtual) and did not receive credit for the course (e.g. failed course).

Drop –When a student signs up for a course with the SCVSP, he/she is given a 10-day grace period in which to change their mind about the class. If a student "drops" the course within the grace period, he or she leaves the course with no grade. If a student waits to drop beyond the grace period he/she will receive 'withdrawn failing' status.

Enrollments – This term refers to the number of actual seats occupied per course. This term does not refer to individual students. For example, one student can sign up for two classes, creating two enrollments.

Home Schooled – This describes a legal option for parents who wish to provide their children with a different learning environment rather than placing them a in public, private and/or charter school.   Instruction generally occurs within the home. A state approved curriculum is required for a child to be home schooled.

Incomplete – Term used when student does not finish the course

Initial Credit – Initial credits are those that are earned when a student enrolls in a course for the first time.

Private School – Private schools are not administered by local, state, or the national government. They retain the right to select their student body and are funded in whole or in part by charging their tuition as opposed to receiving public (state, local) funds.

Public School – Public schools are funded from tax revenue and most commonly administered to some degree by government and/or local government agencies.

Registered – Once a students has completed the SCVSP application, the Sponsor (see below) has received the appropriate paperwork from the guardian/parent and approved the student taking the course requested within the VSA system, the student is listed as "registered."

Session – The period of time designated by the SCVSP for establishing start and finish dates for students taking SCVSP courses, (i.e. Summer Session).

Sponsor – The point of contact (person) designated by an individual or organization registering with the SCVSP. Sponsor responsibilities are outlined in the Guidelines for the South Carolina Virtual School Program. (https://elearning.ed.sc.gov/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab_id=_61_1)

Student Success – For the purpose of this report, student success is defined as the completion of an online course with a passing grade and earning the corresponding credit through participation in the SCVSP.

Withdrawn failing (WF) – The SC Virtual School adheres to the states' uniform grading policy. As such, when a student withdraws from a course after the 10 day grace period, they automatically earn a failing grade; however, if a students who has previously failed a course and is taking a virtual course in order to remove the failing grade withdraws, a second "F" is not recorded.

Withdrawn No Grade (WNG) – When a student chooses to withdraw from a course (for any reason) during the 10 day grace period they withdraw without a penalty; thus, they withdraw with no grade (rather than receiving a failing grade).

Note: There are multiple ways a student can use to leave the virtual learning environment. Options for 'withdrawing' from a course once a student has registered and/or class assigned. SCVSP students' may withdraw – withdraw no grade, withdraw failing.